

Remarks in Allentown, Pennsylvania
October 1, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all for coming. It is great——

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all for coming. It's—what a beautiful day to be here in the Lehigh Valley. It's great to be back in Allentown. It's a wonderful place to come after a debate.

I'm so honored John McCain is traveling with me today. I'm proud of his friendship. I appreciate his leadership. I appreciate his courage, and I'm really grateful he's for me for President.

We had a great debate last night. It highlighted some of the fundamental differences between my opponent and me, differences I believe are crucial for our national security. It's a big difference when it comes to supporting our troops. When America puts our troops in harm's way, I believe they deserve the best training, the best equipment, and the wholehearted support of our Government.

My opponent last night said our troops deserve better. They certainly deserve better than they got from Senator Kerry when he voted to send them to war and then voted against funding our troops in combat.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You may remember his famous quote about the supplemental funding that I sent up to Congress. He said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it." [Laughter] I understand.

Last night——

Audience members. Flip-flop! Flip-flop! Flip-flop!

The President. Last night, he said he made a mistake in how he talked about

that vote, but the mistake wasn't what Senator Kerry said. The mistake was what Senator Kerry did.

He voted against supplying our troops after voting for putting them in harm's way. He then went on to say—after saying the \$87 billion line, they kept pressing him. He said he was proud of his vote. And finally, he said, "The whole thing was a complicated matter." Then he had a new wrinkle, a new explanation. During an interview this week, he described it as a protest vote.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When we put American troops in harm's way, they certainly deserve better than to have a candidate for President use them as a protest.

Last night, Senator Kerry only continued his pattern of confusing contradictions. After voting for the war, after saying my decision to remove Saddam Hussein from power was the right decision, he now says it was all a mistake.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. But I asked a logical question, does that mean our troops are dying for a mistake?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. That's what he said, "No." You can't have it both ways. You can't say it's a mistake and not a mistake. You can't be for getting rid of Saddam Hussein when things look good and against it when times are hard. You can't claim terrorists are pouring across the border into Iraq yet, at the same time, try to claim that Iraq is somehow a diversion for war against terrorism. The President cannot keep changing his mind. The President must speak clearly, and the President must mean what he says.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. A crucial difference between my opponent and me is the most important question for voters this election: Who can lead this war against terror to victory? Which candidate can best protect America's families and our national security? And here my opponent has a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the war against terror, and he has no plan to win in Iraq. The cornerstone of Senator Kerry's plan for Iraq is that he would convene a summit.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I've been to a lot of summits. [Laughter] I've never seen a meeting that would depose a tyrant or bring a terrorist to justice. Senator Kerry claims that he can work with our allies, yet he said those who are standing with us are not a part of a genuine coalition.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He earlier called them "a coalition of the coerced and the bribed," dismissed their sacrifices as window dressing. You cannot lead by pushing away the allies who are already with us or expect any support for a cause you've called a "mistake" or a "grand diversion" or "the wrong war at the wrong place at the wrong time." The way to lead this coalition is not be disdainful or dismissive. The way to lead this coalition to victory is to be clear in our thinking, grateful for the sacrifices, and resolute in our determination to defeat the enemy.

One other point I want to make about the debate last night. Senator Kerry last night said that America has to pass some sort of "global test"—

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. —before we can use American troops to defend ourselves. He wants our national security decisions subject to the approval of a foreign government.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Listen, I'll continue to work with our allies and the international community, but I will never submit America's national security to an international test. The use of troops to defend America must never be subject to a veto by countries like France. The President's job is not to take an international poll. The President's job is to defend America.

I'm grateful you all are here today, because I'm here to ask for your vote. That's what I'm doing. Not only am I here to ask for your vote; I'm here to ask for your help. Listen, I know a lot of people worked hard to put this great crowd together, and I thank you for working hard to do so. I know there's a lot of people working hard to register people to vote, and I want to thank you for doing that too.

And as you register people to vote, make sure you don't overlook discerning Democrats like Zell Miller. And after you get them registered to vote, I encourage you to turn out that vote. Get them headed to the polls. And remind them if they want a safer America, a stronger America, a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Listen, I like traveling with John McCain a lot. My only regret is that Laura is not here instead of him. [Laughter] I kissed her goodbye this morning in Miami, and she said, tell everybody hello in the Lehigh Valley. She was a public school librarian, and when I asked her to marry me, she said, "Fine, I'll marry you, just so long as I never have to give a political speech." [Laughter] I said, "You've got a deal." [Laughter] Fortunately, she didn't hold me to the promise. She's my best advocate. She's a great First Lady.

Audience members. Laura! Laura! Laura!

The President. Listen, I agree with you. I'm going to give you some reasons to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one is so that Laura will be First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm proud of my runningmate. I'm running with a good man in Dick Cheney. He doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. I didn't pick him for his hair. I picked him because of his judgment, his experience. I picked him because he can get the job done for the American people.

I'm proud of the—Tom Ridge. He's done a fabulous job. I want to thank you for preparing him for an incredibly important assignment that he's doing.

I know Arlen Specter is here. I want to—I urge you to put Arlen back in the United States Senate. I want to thank Congressman Pat Toomey. He's a classy guy. He really is. I'm honored to call him friend.

I urge you to put Charlie Dent in the United States Congress. I want to thank all the candidates who are here. I want to thank the local officials who are here. I want to thank the Wil Gravatt Band, who is here. I want to thank the high school band that is here. But most of all, thank you all for coming. It's great to be with so many people.

I'm really looking forward to this campaign. I'm going to tell the people what—where I stand, what I believe, and where I'll lead this Nation for the next 4 years.

I believe every child can learn and every school must teach. I went to Washington to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. I believe we've got to raise the bar. I believe we must measure early to solve problems before it's too late. I know we've got to trust the local people to make the right decisions for your schools. We're making progress in America. We're closing the achievement gap, and we're not going to turn back to the old days.

I believe we have a moral responsibility to honor our seniors with good health care. Medicare was not modernizing the way medicine was. See, I think the seniors got to have the best when it comes to health care. We used to pay—we'd pay \$100,000 when it comes to heart surgery but not one dime for prescription drugs to prevent the heart surgery from being needed in

the first place. That didn't make any sense for our seniors. It didn't make any sense for the taxpayers. We're modernizing Medicare for seniors to get prescription drug coverage in 2006, and we're not going to turn back.

I believe in the energy, innovation, and the entrepreneurial spirit of our workers and small-business owners and farmers and ranchers. That's why we unleashed that energy with the largest tax relief in a generation.

When you're out gathering up the vote, remind people what this economy has been through. The stock market started going down about 5 or 6 months before Dick Cheney and I showed up in Washington. Then we had a recession. Then we had some corporate scandals. By the way, we passed new laws. It's abundantly clear to people of this country we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of this country. And then we got attacked, and that attack hurt our economy.

But this economy is strong, and it's getting stronger, growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. It's strong because our spirit is strong, and it's strong because of well-timed tax cuts.

We've added about 1.7 million new jobs since last summer. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent. That is lower than the average rate of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The unemployment rate here in Pennsylvania is 5.6 percent. So long as anybody is looking for a job, we'll continue to expand with pro-growth, pro-small-business, pro-entrepreneur economic policies.

I believe the most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This is not going to happen on my watch.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I am running for President with a clear and positive plan to build a safer world and a more hopeful America.

I'm running with a compassionate conservative philosophy that Government should help people improve their lives, not try to run their lives. I believe this Nation wants steady, consistent, principled leadership, and that is why, with your help, we'll carry Pennsylvania and win a great victory in November.

The world in which we live is changing, and I understand that. Think about the workplace a couple of decades ago. A person would generally have one job, one career, one pension plan, one health care plan, and that person was usually a male. Today, the workforce has changed a lot. People change careers. They change jobs. Women are working inside the house and outside the house. It's a changing world we live in, and yet, the fundamental institutions of our Government, the fundamental systems, the Tax Code, health coverage, pension plans, worker training, were created for the world of yesterday, not tomorrow. In a new term, we'll transform these systems so that all citizens are equipped, prepared, and thus truly free to make your own choices so you can pursue the great dreams of America.

A hopeful society is one in which this economy continues to grow. To create more jobs in America, America must be the best place in the world to do business. If you want jobs here, this has got to be the best place in the world for people to employ people. That means less regulations on our small businesses. That means legal reform so frivolous lawsuits don't make it hard for expanding the job base.

In order to keep jobs here, Congress needs to pass my energy plan that encourages conservation, spends money on research so we can better use renewable sources of energy, promotes clean coal technology, uses technology to explore for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. We want jobs here; this country must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

To keep jobs here, we've got to reject economic isolationism and open up markets for U.S. products. We've opened up our markets, and it's good for you. The more products you have to choose from, the more likely it is you're going to get what you want at a better price or a higher quality. That's how the marketplace works. So I'm saying to places like China, "You treat us the way we treat you." See, we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere if the rules are fair.

Finally, to make sure we got jobs here and this economy stays strong, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money in Washington and we've got to keep your taxes low. Taxes are an issue in this campaign. I'm running against a fellow who has promised at least \$2.2 trillion in new spending—

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. —so far. [Laughter] Just getting into October. [Laughter] Two-point-two trillion is a lot, even for a Senator from Massachusetts. [Laughter] So they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "That's easy. We'll just tax the rich." Yes, we've heard that before, haven't we? [Laughter] You can't raise enough money by taxing the rich to pay for \$2.2 trillion of new spending. There's a tax gap. Guess who fills the tax gap?

Audience members. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes. You've heard "tax the rich" before, but the rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason—to stick you with the bill. The good news is, we're not going to let him tax you because we're going to win in November.

When it comes to taxes, we've got to do something about the Tax Code. It's a complicated mess, full of special interest loopholes. In a new term, I'll bring Republicans and Democrats together to make this Tax Code more fair for you. We'll make sure our workers have the skills they need. We'll make sure these training programs work and make sure they've got the opportunity to go to community colleges to be

able to match their desire to work with the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

I'll tell you what also I understand in a changing world, most new jobs are filled by people with at least 2 years of college, yet, that's why I'm for—yet, only one in four of our students gets there. That's why I'm for early intervention programs in our high schools to help our at-risk kids. That's why I'm for emphasizing math and science in the classrooms. That's why, over time, we should require a rigorous examination before graduation. By raising performance in our high schools and by expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, we will help more Americans start their career with a college diploma.

In a time of change, we've got to do something about the health care system. The costs are rising rapidly. They burden our economy, and too many people are uninsured. I have a commonsense, practical plan to make high quality health care more available and more affordable. And we have a difference in this campaign when it comes to health care. If you listen carefully to what my opponent proposes, he wants Government to dictate. He wants Government to tell you how to purchase your health care. He wants the Federal Government to run health care. I want you to decide. I want you to be the decisionmaker when it comes to health care.

More than half of Americans who are currently uninsured work for small businesses. Small businesses are having trouble affording health care. We've got to change the law to allow small businesses to join together so they can purchase insurance at the same discounts big businesses get to do.

We'll expand tax-free health savings accounts. We'll give small businesses tax credits to pay into health savings accounts for their employees. We want more workers to have their own health accounts so they can base medical decisions on advice from their doctor, not in negotiations with an

HMO. It makes sense for people to own their own health account. If you're changing jobs or careers, you want to be able to carry your health account with you. You want to be able to manage it yourself.

Listen, I understand we need to take care of the poor and the indigent in this country, and we will by expanding community health centers to every poor county in America.

But let me tell you what else we need to do to make sure health care is available and affordable. We need to do something about these frivolous lawsuits that are running good docs out of business. You cannot be pro-doctor, pro-patient, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put a trial lawyer on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I made my choice. I'm for medical liability reform—now. In all we do to make sure we reform health care, I will make sure that the medical decisions are made by patients and doctors, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

We'll continue to promote an ownership society in America—in changing times, provide stability in somebody's life if they own their own home. Homeownership rates are at an alltime high in America. Over the next 4 years, we'll continue to expand ownership—homeownership to every corner of America. I want more and more people opening the door where they live saying, "Welcome to my house. Welcome to my piece of property."

Let me talk about Social Security right quick. You remember what happened in the campaign in 2000. They said, "If George W. gets elected, they're going to take away the checks of the seniors on Social Security." You remember that, don't you? Yes, it didn't happen. So when they try and say it again in 2004, don't believe them. You'll get your checks. If you're a baby boomer like me, we're okay; we'll get our checks.

But we need to worry about our children or grandchildren when it comes to Social Security. I believe younger workers ought to be able to take some of their own tax money and set up a personal savings account to make sure Social Security fulfills its promise, a personal savings account they call their own, a personal savings account that Government cannot take away.

In this world of change, some things do not change, the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In times of change, we'll support the institutions that give our lives direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every being matters. We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. We stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. Since that terrible morning of September the 11th, 2001, we have fought the terrorists across the Earth, not for pride, not for power, but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We're defending the homeland. We're transforming our volunteer army. We will keep it an All-Volunteer Army. We're reforming and strengthening our intelligence services. We're staying on the offensive. We'll strike the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. We will work to advance liberty in the broader Middle East and around the world, and we will prevail.

Our strategy is succeeding. Think about this: Four years ago, Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida; Pakistan was a transit point for terrorist groups; Saudi Arabia was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising; Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons; Iraq was a gathering threat; and Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks.

Because America led, Afghanistan is free and is fighting terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorist leaders; Saudi Arabia is making raids and arrests; Libya is dismantling its weapons programs; the army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom; and more than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members have been brought to justice.

This progress involved careful diplomacy, clear moral purpose, and some tough decisions. And the toughest came on Iraq. We knew Saddam Hussein's record of aggression. We knew his support for terror. Remember, Saddam harbored Abu Nidal, the leader of a terrorist organization that carried out attacks in Europe and Asia. We knew he harbored Abu Abbas, who took refuge in Baghdad after he killed an American, Leon Klinghoffer, because he was Jewish. We knew Zarqawi was in and out of Baghdad. We knew Saddam Hussein's long history of pursuing and even using weapons of mass destruction. He was a threat.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. And we understand that after September the 11th, we must take threats seriously before they fully materialize. That's a lesson we must never forget. I'll never forget it. I went to the Congress. Members of both political parties, including my opponent, looked at the same intelligence I looked at and came to the same conclusion as my administration came to, that Saddam Hussein was a threat. They authorized the use of force.

Before the Commander in Chief ever commits troops into harm's way, we must try everything possible to deal with threats—everything possible. So I went to the United Nations in the hopes that diplomacy would work. I hoped that Saddam Hussein would listen to the demands of the free world. The United Nations debated the issue. They voted 15 to nothing to say to Saddam Hussein, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." I believe when an international body speaks, it must mean what it says in order to keep

this world peaceful. When you say something, you better mean it.

But Saddam Hussein didn't believe the United Nations. After all, he'd ignored 16 other resolutions. Last night, my opponent said something about, "Well, maybe another resolution would have helped." I just don't think it's realistic. As a matter of fact, the U.N. sent inspectors into Iraq, and as David Kay's report showed, Saddam Hussein was systematically deceiving the inspectors. Somehow thinking inspectors would have caused Saddam Hussein to change is not very clear thinking.

And so at this point in time, I realized diplomacy wasn't working. And so I had a choice to make: Do I take the word of a madman and forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action to defend this country? Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

We didn't find the stockpiles everybody thought was there. But knowing what I know today, I would have taken the same action. And the reason why is because Saddam Hussein had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction. And had the world turned its head, he would have made those weapons. Had we hoped that a resolution would have worked, he would have been able to realize his dreams. He could have passed that capability or those weapons on to terrorists that hate us. After September the 11th, that was a chance we could not afford to take. The world is better off with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

By protecting ourselves, 50 million people now live in freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. And that's in our national interest. Just think about what's happened in Afghanistan. It used to be run by this barbaric group called the Taliban. Many young girls were not allowed even to go to school. Their mothers were taken in the public square and whipped because they refused to toe the line of their dark ideology of hatred. Because we acted, 10 million citizens, 41 percent of whom are women, have

registered to vote in the upcoming Presidential election. In 3 short years, those people have gone from darkness to light because of liberty. And now Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror, and they serve as a bright example for others who wonder whether or not they can live in a free society.

In Iraq, it's hard work. You know it's hard work, and so do I. But Iraq now has a strong Prime Minister, a National Council, and national elections are scheduled for January. We'll succeed in Iraq if we don't send the wrong messages. We'll succeed in Iraq because we've got a plan. And here's the plan. We'll train Iraqis so they can do the hard work in defending themselves; 100,000 troops are trained today, 125,000 by the end of the year. We'll continue to work with them, to give them the equipment, the training they need to defend themselves against the attacks of these terrorists. We'll help them to get the stability, help them on the road to democracy. And then our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

We've got a great United States military, and I want to thank the veterans who are here today for having set such a great example for those who wear the uniform.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. I've talked to Prime Minister Koizumi quite a bit since I've been your President. He's the Prime Minister of Japan. I like to tell this story because I want people to understand exactly what I mean by the transformational power of liberty. It's generally a little longer word than I use—[laughter]—transformational. [Laughter]

Prime Minister Koizumi is the head of a country that was our sworn enemy some 60 years ago. Think about that. My dad fought against the Japanese. John's dad, grandfather, many of your dads and grandfathers did the same thing. Japan was the sworn enemy of America. Harry Truman, after World War II, believed that liberty could transform an enemy into an ally. So

after we won that war, despite skepticism of some, he worked to help Japan become a democracy. And as a result of the belief that liberty can change societies, today, I sit down at the table, talking about the peace we all long for, with the head of Japan. Someday, when we succeed in Iraq, an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq talking about the peace, and the world our children and grandchildren will grow up in will be better for it.

I believe people long to live in a free society. I believe women in the greater Middle East long to live in freedom. I believe that if given the chance, the people of that troubled part of the world will embrace the most honorable form of Government ever devised by man. I believe all these things because freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

This young century will be liberty's century. By promoting freedom at home and abroad, we will build a safer world and a more hopeful America. By reforming our systems of Government, we'll help more Americans realize their dreams. We'll spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of this country. We'll pass the enduring values of our country to a new generation. We will continue to make the world more peaceful and more free.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of our Nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time when we need firm resolve, clear vision, and a deep

faith in the values that makes this a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day that I'll never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember trying to console people as best I could, and a guy grabbed me by the arm, and he said, "Do not let me down." Every day since that day, I wake up trying to figure out how better to protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, as I traveled your great State asking for the vote, I made a pledge that if you gave me a chance to serve, I would uphold the dignity and the honor of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

Thanks for coming. God bless. I appreciate you all. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 a.m. at Lehigh Parkway. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the 2004 Republican National Convention; Charles W. Dent, candidate for Congress in Pennsylvania's 15th Congressional District; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; David Kay, former CIA Special Advisor for Strategy Regarding Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in Manchester, New Hampshire *October 1, 2004*

The President. Thanks for coming. I appreciate you all coming. Thanks. It's great

to be back in the great State of New Hampshire.